

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please AMEND claims 1-21, as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus comprising:
a stack tray which stacks ~~means for stacking~~ a sheet or a sheet bundle;
support unit ~~means~~ capable of moving selectively to a support position at which it supports the lower face of the sheet or the sheet bundle, or an escape position at which it escapes from the lower face of said sheet or said sheet bundle; and
change-over control portion which changes ~~means for changing~~ the support position and the escape position of said support unit ~~means~~; and
~~conveyance means capable of conveying the sheet or the sheet bundle supported by said support means to said stack means,~~
wherein, ~~when the rear end of the sheet or the sheet bundle is brought to reach the upper portion of said support means by said conveyance means,~~ said change-over control portion ~~means~~ moves said support unit ~~means~~ from the support position to the escape position at a first moving velocity thereby to drop the sheet or the sheet bundle onto said stack tray ~~means~~, and then moves said support unit ~~means~~ at ~~such~~ a second moving velocity from the escape position to the support position thereby to push ~~as is specified such that said support means pushes~~ the sheet or the sheet bundle toward said stack tray so as to align ~~the rear end of the sheet or the sheet bundle dropped on said stack means,~~ and
wherein said second moving velocity is slower than said first moving velocity.

2. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said change-over control portion means includes a detection sensor which detects means for detecting the movement of the sheet or the sheet bundle thereby to control the movement of said support unit means on the basis of the detection result of said detection sensor means.

3. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 1 or 2, further comprising:

a handling tray means capable of stacking a plurality of sheets temporarily on the upstream side of said stack tray means and said conveyance means in the sheet conveyance direction thereby to handle the sheet said sheets or the said sheet bundle; and[[,]]

a conveyance portion capable of conveying the sheet or the sheet bundle from said handling tray toward said stack tray.

wherein said support unit supports the lower face of the sheet or the sheet bundle which is conveyed by said conveyance portion. ~~the sheets or the sheet bundle handled by said handling means are conveyed to said stack means by said conveyance means.~~

4. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 3, further comprising:

~~wherein said handling means includes: a handling tray capable of stacking the plurality of sheets temporarily; and at least one of aligning~~ unit which aligns means for aligning the sheets stacked on said handling tray and a staple unit which staples means for stapling the

sheet bundle ~~aligned by said aligning means.~~

5. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 3
[[1]],

wherein said conveyance portion means can move selectively to the support position for supporting the upper face of the sheet sheets or the sheet bundle, or to the escape position escaped from the upper face of the sheet ~~said sheets~~ or the ~~said~~ sheet bundle.

6. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising:

a sheet returning member which returns ~~for returning~~ the sheet sheets or the sheet bundle toward said support unit means each time they are discharged onto said stack tray means.

7. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said stack tray means includes a substantially horizontal sheet stacking face.

8. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said stack tray means can ascend and descend.

9. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus comprising:

a sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 1; and

an image forming portion which forms ~~means for forming~~ an image on a sheet
~~the sheets~~ to be conveyed to said sheet handling apparatus.

10. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus comprising:

a sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 2; and

an image forming portion which forms ~~means for forming~~ an image on a sheet
~~the sheets~~ to be conveyed to said sheet handling apparatus.

11. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus comprising:

an image forming portion which forms ~~means for forming~~ an image on a sheet
~~sheets~~;

a stack tray which stacks ~~means for stacking~~ the image-formed sheet or sheet
bundle;

support unit ~~means~~ capable of moving selectively to a support position at
which it supports the lower face of the image-formed sheet or the sheet bundle, or an escape
position at which it escapes from the lower face of said sheet or said sheet bundle; and

change-over control portion which changes ~~means for changing~~ the support
position and the escape position of said support unit, ~~means~~; and

~~conveyance means capable of conveying the sheet or the sheet bundle~~
~~supported by said support means to said stack means~~;

wherein, ~~when the rear end of the sheet or the sheet bundle is brought to reach~~

~~the upper portion of said support means by said conveyance means~~, said change-over control ~~portion means~~ moves said support ~~unit means~~ from the support position to the escape position at a first moving velocity thereby to drop the sheet or the sheet bundle onto said stack ~~tray means~~, and then moves said support ~~unit means~~ at ~~such~~ a second moving velocity from the escape position to the support position ~~thereby to push~~ as is specified such that said support means pushes the sheet or the sheet bundle toward said stack tray so as to align ~~the rear end of~~ the sheet or the sheet bundle ~~dropped on said stack means~~, and

wherein said second moving velocity is slower than said first moving velocity.

12. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus according to Claim 11,

wherein said change-over control ~~portion means~~ includes a detection sensor ~~which detects means for detecting~~ the movement of the sheet or the sheet bundle thereby to control the movement of said support ~~unit means~~ on the basis of the detection result of said detection ~~sensor means~~.

13. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus comprising:
~~stack tray which stacks means for stacking~~ a sheet or a sheet bundle;
a first support unit means capable of moving selectively to a support position at which it supports the upper face of the sheet or the sheet bundle, or an escape position at which it escapes from the upper face of said sheet or said sheet bundle;

a second support unit means capable of moving selectively to a support

position at which it supports the lower face of the sheet or the sheet bundle, or an escape position at which it escapes from the lower face of said sheet or said sheet bundle;

change-over control portion which changes ~~means for changing~~ the support position and the escape position ~~individually~~ independently of said first support unit means and said second support unit means; and

~~conveyance means capable of conveying the sheet or the sheet bundle supported by said first support means and said second support means to said stack means;~~

wherein, ~~when the rear end of the sheet or the sheet bundle is brought to reach the clamping portion between said first support means and said second support means by said conveyance means;~~ said change-over control portion means controls the individual timings, at which said first support unit means and said second support unit means move from the support position to the escape position, thereby to drop the sheet or the sheet bundle onto said stack tray means, and then moves said second support unit means from the escape position to the support position thereby to push the sheet or the sheet bundle toward said stack tray so as to align the rear end of the sheet or the sheet bundle dropped on said stack means.

14. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 13,

wherein the said change-over control portion means controls the timing at which said first support unit means moves to the escape position so that it becomes simultaneous with or earlier than the timing at which said second support unit means moves to the escape position.

15. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 13 or 14, further comprising:

~~a handling tray means~~ capable of stacking a plurality of sheets temporarily on the upstream side of said stack ~~tray means and said conveyance means~~ in the sheet conveyance direction; ~~and thereby to handle said sheets or said sheet bundle;~~

a conveyance portion capable of conveying the sheet or the sheet bundle from said handling tray toward said stack tray.

wherein said first support unit includes said conveyance portion, and

wherein said second support unit supports the lower face of the sheet or the sheet bundle which is conveyed by said conveyance portion ~~the sheets or the sheet bundle handled by said handling means are conveyed to said stack means by said conveyance means.~~

16. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 15, further comprising:

~~wherein said handling means includes: a handling tray capable of stacking the plurality of sheets temporarily; and at least one of aligning~~ unit which aligns ~~means for aligning~~ the sheets stacked on said handling tray and a staple unit which staples ~~means for stapling~~ the sheet bundle ~~aligned by said aligning means.~~

17. (Currently Amended) A sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 13 ~~or 14~~,

wherein said second support unit ~~means~~ has a lower elastic force in the

supporting state than that of said first support unit ~~means~~ in the supporting state.

18. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus comprising:
a sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 13; and
image forming portion which forms ~~means for forming~~ an image on a sheet ~~the~~
~~sheets~~ to be conveyed to said sheet handling apparatus.

19. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus comprising:
a sheet handling apparatus according to Claim 14; and
image forming portion which forms ~~means for forming~~ an image on a sheet ~~the~~
~~sheets~~ to be conveyed to said sheet handling apparatus.

20. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus comprising:
image forming portion which forms ~~means for forming~~ an image on a sheet;
stack tray which stacks ~~means for stacking~~ the image-formed sheet or sheet
bundle;

first support unit ~~means~~ capable of moving selectively to a support position at
which it supports the upper face of the image-formed sheet or sheet bundle, or an escape position
at which it escapes from the upper face of the said sheet or the said sheet bundle;

second support unit ~~means~~ capable of moving selectively to a support position
at which it supports the lower face of the sheet or the sheet bundle, or an escape position at which
it escapes from the lower face of said sheet or said sheet bundle; and

change-over control portion which changes ~~means for changing~~ the support position and the escape position ~~individually~~ independently of said first support unit ~~means~~ and said second support unit, ~~means; and~~

~~conveyance means capable of conveying the sheet or the sheet bundle supported by said first support means and said second support means to said stack means;~~

wherein, ~~when the rear end of the sheet or the sheet bundle is brought to reach the clamping portion between said first support means and said second support means by said conveyance means;~~ said change-over control portion ~~means~~ controls the individual timings at which said first support unit ~~means~~ and said second support unit ~~means~~ move from the support position to the escape position, thereby to drop the sheet or the sheet bundle onto said stack tray ~~means~~, and then moves said second support unit ~~means~~ from the escape position to the support position thereby to push the sheet or the sheet bundle toward said stack tray so as to align the rear end of the sheet or the sheet bundle ~~dropped on said stack means~~.

21. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus according to Claim 20,

wherein said change-over control portion ~~means~~ includes a detection sensor which detects ~~means for detecting~~ the movement of the sheet or the sheet bundle thereby to control the movements of said first support unit ~~means~~ and said second support unit ~~means~~ on the basis of the detection result of said detection sensor ~~means~~.